



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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K. Cobb  
12/18/03  
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In re application of:

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Appl. No.: 10/067,729

Confirmation No.: 7195

Filed: February 7, 2002

For: FAST-PITCH SOFTBALL PITCHING  
TUTOR

Group Art Unit: 3711

Examiner: Mitra ARYANPOUR

Atty. Docket No. : 42676-197939

Customer No.

26694

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

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NOV 26 2003

Substitute Specification Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.125 (b)-(e) TECHNOLOGY CENTER R3700

# **FAST-PITCH SOFTBALL PITCHING TUTOR**

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## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

### Field Of Invention

[0001] The invention is a softball pitching teacher. More particularly, the invention is an apparatus used for softball pitchers to correct systematic errors and to teach pitchers the basic fundamentals of pitching. The device helps the accuracy of a pitch and to help conquer the every day struggles a pitcher encounters.

### Description Of Related Art

[0002] There are basic steps a pitcher learns as he/she begins pitching; these steps are the foundation of being an elite softball pitcher. The basic fundamentals of pitching consists of a straight arm circle (no bending of the elbow), release by the hip, and--most importantly--wrist snap that is released against the body. These necessary steps are a daily struggle to perfect throughout a pitcher's softball career. The release point should be at the hip and so close to the body that it skims the clothes of the pitcher; many pitchers find this hard to do and will release in front of their hip and far away from their body; the result is a wild pitch. The hardest achievement in softball is the correct wrist snap. The importance of a fast wrist snap is to increase the speed of a pitch; the faster and harder the wrist snap the more spin and the faster the ball goes.

[0003] By using the present invention, these basic fundamentals can be mastered, this device will open up a window of opportunity for a pitcher to rise above the rest.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention enhances a pitcher's ability to correct and master the necessary fundamentals in his/her pitching career. This device will correct a pitcher's straight arm; the "Pitching Tutor" will contact the forearm, stopping the elbow from bending. Secondly, the pitching tutor will correct the release point. Thirdly, the device focuses on wrist snap. With this device the pitcher will learn to snap the wrist correctly due to the blocking of the forearm, which forces a pitcher to snap the wrist to get movement on the ball.

[0005] The invention is an advanced tool for softball pitchers. The function of this tool is to teach beginner pitchers the basic fundamentals of pitching and also to correct common pitching errors. There are several existing problems that occur when pitching which can be solved by using the present invention. The most common error in pitching is where to release the ball. For instance, a pitcher releases the ball past his/her hips, the ball will go high above the strike zone, but if the ball is released behind his/her hips it will hit the dirt before it reaches the plate. Also, a pitcher often releases the ball away from his/her hip, which will cause the ball to move far to the right or to the left and most likely hit the batter. Another problem that can be solved using the device of the present invention is the tendency to bend the elbow when releasing the ball. For example, the main part of pitching is the wrist snap. If the elbow bends when a pitcher's wrist snaps, the ball will have the tendency to be high because the whole arm is lined up above

the hip and not at the hip. The advantage of using the invention is that the softball pitcher will have the correct form a pitcher needs to be a dominant player on the diamond. This invention will guarantee that the pitcher will have correct wrist snap as he/she releases the ball and that the elbow will not bend because the forearm contacts the device and prevents the natural bending of the arm. The device will force a pitcher to release close to the body and at the hip; these are basic fundamentals that have to be taught and mastered to excel as a pitcher in softball.

[0006] The invention includes a protruding arm or plastic siding which protrudes away from the body to provide a blocking point for the pitcher's forearm. The design of the protruding arm enables right and left handers to use the invention. The protruding arm is part of an "L" shaped member that also includes a backing secured to the hip through use of a belt. The structure of the invention enables it to be durable. The invention teaches a softball pitcher to release the ball at the hip, to have accurate wrist snap and to control the bending of the arm.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Figure 1 illustrates the L-shaped plastic piece as attached to the belt according to an embodiment of the invention;

[0008] Figure 2 illustrates the position of the padding according to an embodiment of the invention;

[0009] Figure 3 illustrates the position of the smaller padding according to an embodiment of the invention;

[0010] Figure 4 illustrates the leather cover; and

[0011] Figure 5 illustrates an embodiment of the invention in use.

#### DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0012] The present invention is a device that can be used as an advanced tool for softball pitchers. The function of the device is to teach beginner pitchers the basic fundamentals of pitching and also to correct common pitching errors. The invention has the advantage that a single size can fit all players. A description of the invention's design illustrates its function.

[0013] As shown in Figures 1-4, the four components of the device 90 according to the invention are as follows: An "L" shaped plastic piece 20, which consists of the plastic backing 20a and a protruding arm or plastic siding 20b. The plastic backing 20a, 1 cm x 8 cm x 16 cm (0.5" x 3.25" x 6.5), rests on the hip. The plastic siding 20b, 1 cm x 13.5-cm x 16 cm (0.5" x 5.25" x 6"), is the part that protrudes away from the plastic backing 20a. The second component is the belt 10, 0.5 cm x 9 cm- x 90 cm (  $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 2.25" x 18"), which connects to the plastic "L" shaped piece 20. A hook and loop type fastener 70, e.g. VELCRO connects to the belt 10 and is 1/4 cm x 6 cm x 47 cm (  $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 2.25" x 18"). The third component is the foam padding 40 glued to the plastic backing 20a. This is 3 cm x 10 cm x 18 cm (1.25" x 4" x 7.25"). The foam padding 30 for the plastic siding 20b is 10 cm x 15.5 cm x 18.5 cm (4" x 6.25 x 7.5"). The last major component is the leather cover 50, 1/4 cm x 36 cm x 46 cm (  $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 14" x 18"), which is wrapped around the entire device.

[0014] As seen in Figure 1, the "L" shaped plastic piece 20, can include a rectangular cut out 60 at the crease of the "L". As illustrated in Figure 5, the plastic backing 20a is the back of the "Tutor" rests on the hip of the pitcher when in use. The plastic siding 20b, extends out from the backing approximately sixteen centimeters (6.5") long. The plastic siding's 20b purpose is to maintain the pitcher's release of the ball close to the hip (See Figure 5). The two parts of the "L" shaped plastic 20a serve to maintain the shape and durability of the invention.

[0015] Attached to the "L" shaped plastic is the belt 10; a loop and hook fastener 70, e.g. VELCRO, is sewed around the belt 10 to ensure the tightness of the belt around the hip. The belt 10 is slightly smaller in width than the plastic piece 20, and is approximately ninety centimeters (37") long. The belt slides through the rectangular cut out 60, on the inside of the "L" shaped plastic backing 20a. As shown in Figure 5, the belt securely fastens the "Pitching Tutor" to the hip of the user.

[0016] After the belt 10 and the plastic 20 are securely together, the next step in the process is to add two pieces of foam padding over the main plastic parts 20, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. In doing this process there are two steps. The first step is to glue a foam pad 40 on the interior and exterior parts of the plastic backing 20a (See Figures 2 and 3). The second step is to glue a foam pad 30 on the interior of the plastic backing 20a, as shown in Fig. 2. The foam's purpose is to guarantee safety and comfort when the pitcher's arm contacts the device 90 when releasing the ball (Figure 5). As shown in Figure 4, a leather cover 50 is wrapped completely around the device 90. The leather cover 50 ties in the components of the device 90 into a unitary piece. It secures the main pieces together for a long lasting product.

[0017] The present invention can be used as an all around problem solver in the pitcher's world. It solves the major imperfections and difficulties of releasing at the hip and right to the hip.